

## **MY EARLIEST MEMORIES**

From title and style, looks to have been written around the age of 13–14

Before I continue, I feel that I must first confess that I can remember hardly any of my early days. The images that I can recall are very vague and faint. Except for one, very vivid memory which, curiously enough, is one of the earliest of all.

I can clearly remember this one particular day, in all details, which is strange, as I have mentioned before that all other memories since are much more vague. It was a bright summer morning, the sun blazing down from a clear blue sky and I was very small. That is one of the most notable aspects of this memory – that everything seemed so huge. I suppose I must have been around one or two, I know that I was just learning to talk, as around the time in question was forever chattering and giggling to myself in my own little language, interspersed with the occasional word of English.

I used to spend those summer mornings playing in the front garden in the long, uncut grass. I would spend my time experimenting with my newfound motor functions and exploring the wealth of fun and excitement that was the natural world! This involved the collection of various insects and other small animals such as earthworms and spiders that I found in cracks in the dry stone wall that surrounded our garden, in the lush green grass of the lawn or the dark nooks and crannies behind the garden shed.

After the hunt, I would then mix my catch together in an old container (usually a recently opened yoghurt) and watch them writhe around in the goo and eat each other. Wonderful. These "arena mornings" were usually a very noisy affair as I tended to give a form of running commentary of the battle that raged in the bottom of my yoghurt pot stadium.

My Parents who were normally residents of the kitchen or the back garden, could keep an eye on me through the kitchen window or keep tabs on me by listening to my gabblings and squeaks. Happy gurgling denoted a well and contented child, whereas wails and screams hinted that something was wrong – or that the centipede had just eaten the woodlouse.

This particular morning, however, I was uncomfortably quiet for quite sometime and my mother, who was my warden that day, noticed this unusual silence. She became increasingly alarmed and finally decided that the calm had gone on for an unnatural length of time, so she ventured out of the house into my garden domain to investigate. She walked out to where I was sitting, my back turned to her, surrounded by various toys and plastic utensils. Fearing that something was wrong, she approached me and my insect gladiator arena to see if I was alright. Her attention was immediately grasped by the two, large, black claws protruding from my mouth. I remember distinctly looking up at my mother, smiling as I munched thoughtfully on the unfortunate stag beetle that had unluckily found itself cornered by the master insect hunter and ended up in my clutches. I remember its black juice dribbling down my chin as I looked up at my mother, perplexed as to why she had suddenly turned a very pale white and a look of horror had fallen across her face . . . . .

Maybe she was hungry too?